

## **Ulysses S. Grant at Shiloh**

Nate Kim

University Laboratory High School, Urbana

Teacher: Rosemary Laughlin

The Battle of Shiloh where America's future eighteenth President led the Union army was a very bloody affair. Ulysses S. Grant learned an important lesson in the battle because his seemingly little mistake resulted in one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. However, Grant was not easily pinned down by the attacking Confederate forces; on the contrary, he held on until reinforcements came and prevented the Confederates from winning the battle. Ulysses S. Grant was a stout, straight-minded, superb leader who bravely stood his ground in the Battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, 1862.

Grant was born April 27, 1822, and died July 23, 1885. He eventually became commander of the Union Armies. His headquarters as head of the Illinois volunteers was established in Cairo, Illinois, in September 1861. He ruined several Confederate plans by winning battles such as Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, where he used his famous gunboat strategy, and Fort Donelson, where he obtained his first unconditional surrender. When he won those battles, he did not suffer much loss.

The Battle of Shiloh was a major battle in the American Civil War because it turned the war from Confederate dominance to Union dominance. It was named after a church on the battlefield, and is also called the Battle of Pittsburg Landing.

After General Henry Wager Halleck had given Grant top command for his victories at Forts Donelson and Henry, he made him a Major General. Grant's army had

pushed southward from St. Louis and had captured Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, and camped near Shiloh Church. Union general Don Carlos Buell from Nashville was going to join him there. Grant waited for Buell for almost a month. During this wait, Grant loosened his defense and allowed his soldiers to stray for drilling and merry-making. He telegraphed General Halleck and said that he had scarcely the faintest idea of attack”, and that was when the Confederates struck hard.

Generals Johnston and Beauregard of the Confederate army brought 44,000 men with them from Corinth, Mississippi, 4,000 more than Grant had. They attacked Grant on April 6, 1862, before Buell came. Grant had been totally caught off guard, and there was mass confusion on both sides, because most of the soldiers had never been in battle before. However, Grant kept his cool even though he was caught by surprise; he did not surrender. He defended Shiloh as best he could with his 40,000 men. Grant ordered his troops to hold their position as they were pressed against a nearby river. During the course of the battle, Grant finally established and held a line that stopped the southern advance along a sunken road.

However, the Confederates had also brought sixty-two cannons, the largest number of cannons ever used at that time in a war effort, and fired them at point blank range toward the sunken road. Bullets buzzed through the saplings around the area so that it looked and sounded like a hornet’s nest, hence the nickname of that part of the battle, Hornet’s Nest. The Hornet’s Nest was taken by Grant in six hours.

There was also another battle going on at a peach orchard, just yards away from the Hornet's Nest. Peach blossoms were said to have covered the dead like a fresh fallen snow. Confederate General Johnston bled to death in his part of the Battle of Shiloh. On the night of April 6, 25,000 reinforcements (18,000 were Buell's) arrived at Pittsburg Landing and only 700 came for the Confederates.

The next morning, April 7, 1862, the Confederates were pushed back on the ground that they had fought so hard to win the day before. In the afternoon, they evacuated the field and were forced to retreat to Corinth, Mississippi, some twenty miles south. A total of 23,746 men were killed, wounded, or missing. Shiloh was a decisive battle in the war because the South needed this territory in Tennessee near access to the Mississippi River to win and make up for land lost in Kentucky and Ohio. It also needed to keep control of the Mississippi Valley. Memphis and Vicksburg were now vulnerable to Union attack, and after Corinth, there was doubt that those cities would be the next targets. [From *A Very Bloody Affair*. [www.geocities.com/Heartland/Acres/1257/Shiloh/Heartland/Acres/1257/Shiloh.html](http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Acres/1257/Shiloh/Heartland/Acres/1257/Shiloh.html). (Nov. 18, 2004); *Battle of Shiloh* Wikipedia. En. [wikipedia.org/wiki/battle of Shiloh](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/battle%20of%20Shiloh) (Nov. 18, 2004).]